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Plot for comic-style storyboards  
Character Development  
“Pilot”

Second Draft 20-09-07

## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Pilot

#### Page 1

Panel 1-3: A white scorched desert. A large sand vessel heads towards us. It is shaped like an up-ended cicada shell.

Panel 4-6: Sand vessel from behind. It heads towards a large, low, cylindrical structure, half-buried in the desert sand, and coloured to blend in with its surroundings.

Panel 7: XCU of CORBEN WALLACE'S profile: his patrician nose juts out like a ship's rudder, and his heavy brow pushes down on his lead-shielded prosthetic eyes.

CORBEN: Prepare for docking at station 35.

Panel 8: XCU of MARCUS' finger pushing a button labelled “DOCK”.  
SFX: FTSHHHH!

Panel 9: Ext of sand boat docking at a bay in the structure, back end first.

MARCUS: Docking complete.

Panel 10: Long thin panel of crates from the shelf side. One crate has been taken down, revealing SAL stacking a loader. SAL is a thin, pale, Eurasian man. He has greasy hair, and a soiled shirt. His left arm is covered in an armoured sleeve, and he wears thick brown workmen gloves.

CORBEN: Ready the cargo.

#### Page 2

Panel 1: CORBEN and MARCUS meet in the elevator.

Panel 2: XCU CORBEN hands MARCUS a small grey crate.

CORBEN: Aziz will most certainly try and barter for more.

MARCUS: How much can I offer him?

CORBEN: I have two extra crates in my private hold. Barter no more than one.

MARCUS: And if he still refuses?

CORBEN: Get creative.

Panel 3: The elevator doors open and reveal the cargo bay. SAL can be seen below, putting a final crate on the loader.

Panel 4: CORBEN and MARCUS descend into the cargo bay. SAL eyes the crate in MARCUS' hands.

SAL: Unlisted cargo... and Blair is strangely silent in my presence...

CORBEN: The less you know...

Panel 5: CORBEN presses a button on the wall and the cargo doors begin to open

SFX: Whrrrrrrrrr....

SAL: ...the more the Outlander gets away with.

### **Page 3**

Panels 1-3: Shows three stages of the back of the sand boat rolling up to reveal the three men standing in the bay.

CORBEN: Sal, you're to come with me. Marcus, Aziz will be expecting you.

SAL: With any luck, he'll recruit Blair as a trader.

CORBEN: If they wouldn't take a Southern runt, why would they bother with an Outlander?

Panel 2: Market from the POV of the cargo bay: a sprawling underground maze littered with stalls. Every walkway is packed with other sand boaters: large men and women clad in leaden armour, bartering goods.

SAL: He could always beg. Save himself the embarrassment of banishment upon return to Stanton.

Panel 4: Silhouette of the sand-boat bay with the door opened. MARCUS can clearly be seen walking ahead; CORBEN and SAL followed by the loader head down the ramp.

CORBEN: We rendezvous in 30 minutes.

### **Page 4**

Panel 1: CORBEN walks through Market with SAL. All around them, traders hock their wares, offering bargain prices.

SAL: Underhanded dealings in illegal wares. Makes me miss Tholemo.

Panel 2: A TRADER shows them his wares.

TRADER: Two pounds of goat meat for this fine engine?

CORBEN: (to TRADER) It's not worth the rind. (to SAL) Your brother's legacy affects all our actions these lengthening days.

Panel 2: MARCUS arrives at a small hut set apart from the rest of Market. There is a large guard

sitting outside the entrance.

SAL: Yes, and leaving me out of the loop is true to his form, well done.

Panel 3: He stands as MARCUS approaches.

CORBEN: Whatever you think you know, Sal, I would advise you to keep it to yourself.

Panel 4: XCU of MARCUS' package.

SAL: Just here in Market, or just in general dealings with anyone?

Panel 5: XCU of the GUARD'S eyes widening.

Panel 6: CU of GUARD pushing back the curtain door.

## **Page 5**

Panel 1: Hut interior. Panel is flanked by MARCUS on right (from behind). In the centre is a small round wooden table. A single spotlight shines down on it. All around just out of reach of the light are various piles of boxes, scrolls and consoles.

Panel 2: From the shadows in the back, a small man – face obscured by the shadows – speaks.

AZIZ: It was a dark day, Marcus Blair, when your lifeless corpse hailed helplessly down onto our caravan. Broken and bleeding, we could have let the desert claim you... but it was a lean year. My wife, may the winds take her South, suggested we keep you in case one would be mad enough to trade for a man. Curse your saviour who was. Now – 16 years later, I meet you again, resurrected. A man reborn, and seeking information on a long-forgotten project that has earned me my livelihood. But for what purpose?

Panel 3: MARCUS approaches the table.

Panel 4: He looks at it.

Panel 5: He sits, cross-legged.

## **Page 6**

Panel 1: AZIZ steps forward from the shadows. Only the bottom half of his face is now lit: his eyes are still masked by the shadow of his khaki head-scarf. It is clear he has a hooked nose, and a pointed goatee.

Panel 2: MARCUS places the crate on the table.

MARCUS: My purpose is trade.

Panel 3: AZIZ smiles.

AZIZ: And once the information is in your possession?

Panel 4: MARCUS opens the lid.

MARCUS: The price you asked for was at great cost to my commune. What I do with the information is not your concern.

Panel 5: AZIZ looks into the crate.

AZIZ: Such a cost I assume has been kept secret, and must – even now – be a mystery to them? I am not unfamiliar with your customs regarding the growing of contraband.

## **Page 7**

Panel 1: MARCUS and AZIZ sit across from each other. AZIZ on the left – a small, robed man on a stool; MARCUS on the right – a giant, forced to sit cross-legged upon the ground, and hunched over.

MARCUS: Do you have the information we requested at the last trade meet?

AZIZ: I do. Where is the rest of the fungus?

MARCUS: Show me the console, and I shall retrieve the rest.

Panel 2: CU of AZIZ. He is chuckling.

AZIZ: My, they have taught you well! I am impressed, my son. Why I did not keep you as one of my own, is a mystery that eludes even my cunning mind. Very well.

Panel 3: XCU of AZIZ clicking his fingers. Behind his hand, a small man-servant approaches with a console.

Panel 4: The console on the table. MARCUS taps the keyboard with a thick finger.

AZIZ: As you requested: an historical account of the project known as “Character Development”. It outlines its purpose, its implementation, why it was sabotaged and buried...

MARCUS: Does it tell us how it can be stopped?

Panel 4: AZIZ closes the console.

AZIZ: I did come across knowledge of this, but Marcus, let me stress to you: the heartbreak you felt for one woman's death amounts to nothing against the lives you will ruin should you follow that path.

Panel 5: CU MARCUS face. He looks straight at AZIZ.

Panel 6: Side shot. AZIZ hands back the console to his man-servant. The man servant is handing him a second one.

AZIZ: You seemed shocked; like one who has forgotten he is dealing with a Data Miner.

MARCUS: The information you have is worth two crate of fungus. I have an extra crate. It is yours if you hand over the console right now.

AZIZ: Now you have shown your hand, and this, I am afraid, will cost you more than what you

came to bargain with. I cannot give you this information, Blair, for the knowledge is priceless. You believe you are seeking vengeance for the loss of loved ones, but you and your “colleagues” have no concept of what you are really asking.

## **Page 8**

Panel 1: A sweeping panorama of the complex maze that is Market.

AZIZ: It is the shifting desert that enables us to trade. It opens doors and pathways; it brings the goods from the Out-lands into the desert where you and your kind wish to live. You claim you suffer hardships in your new found independence, when all the while your very trade is both a shameful secret and a necessary reliance on the cities you left behind. Put an end to the shifts, and you put an end to the lives of some six other communes like yours, who will have nothing but the meagre supplies they grow in hovels and caves, and nought but goat meat to feed their starving children; children who need bread, milk, and shelter.

Panel 2: CU or MARCUS.

MARCUS: The shifting plains slowly push the Commune of Young closer to the radioactive wastelands. They may be able to hold out for a few months if they construct shields, but many will perish. In Stanton, the moisture caves used to cultivate your “price” now cave in with every shift of the Ring Plateau. We barely have time to harvest enough moist soil before the shift closes the caves for good. We did not suffer to return without information.

AZIZ: You forget, my son, that the desert is large, and there are many havens yet to be found.

Panel 3: AZIZ smiles. He opens the second console.

AZIZ: I can see you are still not convinced. Very well. I shall make you a counter-offer. One crate for...

Panel 4: XCU of console. a picture of a dark haired girl lying in a hospital bed.

Panel 5: MARCUS looks astonished.

MARCUS: You found her.

## **Page 9**

Panel 1: CORBEN contemplates a small gadget.

MINAULD: Now what would you want with a carbonic converter? It would only get clogged up in sand on your way home.

Panel 2: A small blonde woman looks over her shoulder at him.

SAL: Alas, gone are the days when an honest man could haggle without having to confront his misdeeds.

Panel 3: CU of MINAULD. She is frowning.

MINAULD: Still haven't learnt how to keep your pet on a leash, Corben?

CORBEN: I see you've come of age...

Panel 4: CORBEN spies a group of men trading nearby.

CORBEN: ...and have joined the Young crew. But so sparsely armoured... where is your craft?

MINAULD: Unlike the luddites in Stanton, Corben, we at Young use our brains.

Panel 5: MINAULD inspects CORBEN'S eyes.

MINAULD: The shielding is getting worn. When might you come to Young for a check up?

CORBEN: Why should I set foot in the town my own daughter deserted me for?

Panel 6: CU MINAULD smiling.

Minauld: Very well, if that's your attitude. Give my love to the Prince.

Panel 7: MINAULD walks away. Some of the Young crew scowl at CORBEN.

SAL: If your eyes are as damaged as she says...

Panel 8: CORBEN hits SAL without breaking his gaze on the Young crew.

## **Page 10**

Panel 1: MARCUS slams AZIZ onto the table.

MARCUS: You try too hard to distract me from my cause. I have brought you your payment. I am taking your information. A done deal. As a bonus, I let you live.

AZIZ: You forget who you're threatening, Marcus.

Panel 2: MARCUS pours the fungus all over AZIZ.

Panel 3: MARCUS snatches the console from the man-servant, but the man-servant has a tenacious grip.

Panel 4: AZIZ calls his guards.

Panel 5: The guard from outside enters the front flap.

## **Page 11:**

Panel 1: MARCUS charges forward wielding the man-servant.

Panel 2: Man-servant slams into the guard's face.

Panel 3: MARCUS pushes both aside.

Panel 4: SAL whips around when he hears a noise off.

SFX: CRASH!

SAL: We have the goods, yes?

Panel 5: CORBEN from behind, his head half-turned to look back.

Panel 6: MARCUS charges up the maze crashing through several stores towards CORBEN and SAL.

Panel 7: SAL and CORBEN look shocked.

CORBEN: Secure the loaders and program them to rendezvous with the boat.

SAL: Already done, Captain.

## **Page 12**

Panel 1: AZIZ bursts from his tent.

AZIZ: Issue a lock-down! No South-Lander escapes until Blair is dead!

Panel 2: Several traders turn to face MARCUS. They have armed themselves with various miscellany.

Panel 3: MARCUS crashes through their ranks like a well-aimed bowling ball.

Panel 4: A large trader pulls out some fire-arms.

Panel 5: CORBEN turns and sees him.

PANEL 6: MARCUS in the gun sights.

PANEL 7: CORBEN lifts the trader over his head.

Panel 8: CORBEN throws the trader.

CORBEN: I trust the trade went well?

Panel 9: MARCUS slams the small man away with a right hook.

MARCUS: He was happy to accept just the one crate.

## **Page 13:**

Panel 1: CORBEN and MARCUS run for the sand boat. It's cargo door is opening.

Panel 2: Long perspective shot – many sand boats are being locked down.

SFX: Choonk! Choonk! Choonk! (all getting closer to the Stanton one)

MARCUS: I hope Sal has the good mind to...

Panel 3: The sand-boat roars to life, and pulls free of the gate before the lock bolts fire.

Panel 4: MARCUS and CORBEN jump aboard, but AZIZ has grabbed a hold of MARCUS. He aims a weapon at his head.

Panel 5: AZIZ fires.

Panel 6: the latch to the sand-boat door snaps.

Panel 7: MARCUS looks up as the door rolls down towards him.

#### **Page 14:**

Panel 1: MARCUS jumps clear of the door, as the Sand Boat pulls away from the port.

Panel 2: MARCUS lands on AZIZ, crushing him.

Panel 3: MARCUS looks up and sees he is surrounded by more traders than he can handle.

Panel 4: Low angle showing MINAULD hanging from the ceiling.

MINAULD: Marcus!

MARCUS looks up.

Panel 5: XCU of a grappling firing into the chest of the nearest trader.

Panel 6: XCU of MARCUS grabbing the rope.

Panel 7: High angle of MARCUS being hauled up towards the ceiling.

#### **Page 15:**

Panel 1: CORBEN enters the cockpit. SAL is at the controls.

SAL: As much as I regret losing Blair, we have no pilot, captain.

CORBEN: If you don't get some armour on, I'll be down a loader, too.

Panel 2: CORBEN and SAL look up, surprised.

SFX: THUNK!

Panel 3: CORBEN runs out onto the gangway outside the cockpit.

Panel 4: The Elevator doors open, revealing only a sliver of the hulking silhouette inside.

Panel 5: CORBEN catches the console that is thrown at him.

Panel 6: Long panel showing CORBEN catching the console, and MARCUS exiting the elevator.

CORBEN: Good work, Pilot. Get to your station before Sal burns any blacker.



**Page 16:**

Panel 1: MARCUS enters the cockpit – SAL looks disappointed.

SAL: Just when the day was getting better...

Panel 2: CORBEN sits at his station.

Panel 3: CORBEN opens the console, and it boots.

Panel 4: CORBEN'S confused face.

Panel 5: XCU of console: A picture of a dark-haired girl stares back. The information reads:  
Sarah Navara: rescued from the Vincent thermal mines. Age: 14. Irreparable damage to legs, pelvis,  
and right arm. Internal damage should have been fatal. Interned into the Agent Black program on  
consent of mother, Fietta.

Panel 6: Exterior desert. The sand boat rolls through the desolate plains. Overhead, a dirigible floats  
high in the sky.

CORBEN: Marcus... who is Sarah Navara?

**END.**

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